

Good evening. First, I want to acknowledge that this land, which is named for the Ute Tribe, is the traditional and ancestral homeland of the Shoshone, Paiute, Goshute, and Ute Tribes. Salt Lake City respects and recognizes the enduring relationship between many Indigenous peoples and their ancestral homelands, and we respect the sovereign relationship between tribes, cities, states, and the federal government. We cherish our partnership with Native Nations and Urban Indian communities and affirm our commitment to strengthening that connection in the years to come.

We're here this evening at the City and County Building. I had hoped to deliver this address before a room full of vaccinated and masked community leaders, air quality scientists, and medical professionals, but the surge in COVID-19 cases has made that impossible.

Just as it did last year.

I appreciate you tuning in to watch at home. I truly believe that the more Salt Lake City residents engage with our government, the better, so thank you for making the time to be with us this evening.

I'm grateful as well to be joined here this evening by vaccinated, distanced, N95-masked members of the Salt Lake City Council and Chief Brown from the Salt Lake City Police Department, who have been extraordinary partners in the fight against COVID-19. They have earnestly, consistently, and professionally acted in the best interests of our city throughout this pandemic, making tough, but necessary decisions to keep people safe. Thank you for your commitment and for your service.

While we should not — we *can* not — allow ourselves to be *defined* by the crises that have challenged our city over these last two years, we can not ignore the context they create for *this* moment in our city's history.

COVID-19... earthquakes... the inland hurricane... a spiraling housing market... surging homelessness... our city has seen no shortage of crises. They have forced us to adapt and innovate, and to reassess and reprioritize... well... everything.

In my State of the City address last year, I noted how eager we all were for things to get back to "normal," but I challenged us all not to settle for merely "going back" to the way things were before the pandemic.

That's because "normal" wasn't *good* for everybody.

"Normal" wasn't *safe* for everybody.

"Normal" wasn't equitable, just, or *fair* for everybody.

We can and we must aspire to do better; to improve; to keep innovating; to build a government that *works* for everyone and a community that embraces not only equality but equity.

The pandemic has been a test in so many ways and whether we have passed that test should be measured not just in our survival rate, but also in our ability to strengthen our city and improve people's lives over the long term. That's what I'm here to talk to you about tonight.

As we did last year, we recently shared with residents a report card assessing my administration's work on its goals for the past year. It's a candid, transparent, and humbling look at our successes, our failures, and our ongoing work for this city.

You can find the report card online at www.slcmayorplan.com.

Crises have a way of narrowing the field of vision. They crowd out the *important* in the name of addressing the *urgent*. Crises also tend to diminish standards and lower expectations. But through all the crises... through all the emergencies... through the dark days and uncertain times... *our* focus has not waned. *We* have not been distracted, not for one minute.

I am in awe of our city employees, who have adapted and innovated in the ways they serve our community. And I am inspired each and every day by the grit and grace shown by the people of this city, coming together to not only survive, but to thrive.

These crises continue to test us. They have tested our government and they have tested our community, but we are emerging stronger, safer, and more equitable than ever before. We've persevered with more compassion for our neighbors and more commitment to our community.

Crime is down, we've taken historic steps toward better air quality and 100 percent renewable energy; and we've never been more focused on equity and justice.

Our city is resilient... Our city is strong... and I stand here deeply proud to serve as its mayor.

No challenge has better embodied that resilience than our air quality.

It's the reason I entered politics in the first place.

Fifteen years ago, I was cradling my newborn son, Cash — who is in high school now and is easily embarrassed by his mom [chuckles] — and I was listening to a report on KUER about how the air quality here was so bad it could literally take two years off his life. I briefly considered moving away, but instead I decided to get to work.

I joined Utah Moms for Clean Air and then co-founded Breathe Utah to try to create long-term change. I went back to the U to get a master's degree in science and technology. I am a clean air advocate in my soul, and as *our mayor* air quality is the lens through which I see every issue.

On a lot of days, I don't like what I see through those lenses.

There is no quick fix for our air quality problems. There is no magic wand that can be waved or giant fan on the Oquirrh Mountains that will clean the air throughout the valley. It *will* take decades to recover from the damage that it took decades to inflict.

It has never been as simple as 'just electing a mayor who cares enough' or 'just getting a council willing to make tough choices.'

But complexity cannot be a justification for timidity. Having so many factors beyond our control requires not only boldness and ambition, but also creativity and resilience.

And the fact is, through all of the crises of the last two years, my administration has been hard at work making historic progress in our city's fight to improve our air quality.

That progress has come on four tracks that *remove* pollution, get us *better data*, *reduce* the volume that we create, and finally deliver *100 percent renewable energy* to our entire city.

First, we're removing more pollution and increasing the production of oxygen by expanding our urban forest. Trees generate oxygen, extract pollution from the air, and lower heating and cooling costs.

The inland hurricane claimed more than 1,300 of our public trees. With the help of TreeUtah and many generous donations, I'm proud to report that our Urban Forestry division has replaced each and every tree lost to that storm with a brand new tree either in the same spot or another location in the city.

During my campaign for mayor, I called out a staggering geographic inequity in the city's canopy. West side neighborhoods suffer worse air quality than the East side but have shockingly fewer trees. That's why I pledged to plant an additional 1,000 new trees on the West side every year I'm mayor. I'm proud to report that with the help of our incredible partners we have fulfilled that promise and planted 2,000 new trees so far in the Rose Park, Glendale, Poplar Grove, Westpointe, Jordan Meadows, and Fairpark neighborhoods.

It's easy to underestimate the impact these trees can have. It may look like simple beautification to some, but the 2,000 trees we have planted will grow to generate half a million pounds of new oxygen and take 20,000 pounds of pollution out of the air each year. And they'll do it in the neighborhoods that need it the most.

These trees are not only a tool for environmental progress, but for environmental *justice*. While we do the work of addressing equity across the board, we are also *planting the roots* of a more equitable Salt Lake City with each tree that goes in the ground.

It's my hope that these trees will be just the beginning.

We won't surrender to the pollution. We have to fight back. And these trees help us do it.

Our second air quality track empowers people to inform and protect themselves from the valley's poor air quality.

Last year, the City Council approved my funding request for new air quality monitors to be installed in Salt Lake City, and we are partnering with the University of Utah to place seven black carbon monitors at different locations across the city. Black carbon is a particularly harmful form of PM2.5 pollution and this neighborhood-level information will give residents a clearer picture of air conditions citywide.

We've also joined an innovative County-led project that is installing research-grade air quality monitors on electric buses to provide real-time data across the valley.

Our air quality changes day to day and the quality isn't consistent across the city. Making decisions to protect your health — like whether to go on a run outdoors after work or to take your kid to the playground — is complicated without good information about what the air is like.

Well, that good information is coming and will soon be available in a real-time online dashboard.

On our third track, we're reducing the *volume* of pollution the city creates.

The city's bold new Sustainable Development Policy is the most aggressive move yet to limit the volume of greenhouse gasses created by our city's buildings.

Acting as the RDA Board, the City Council in December approved my policy requiring *all* new buildings funded with city dollars to be emission-free by 2023. Building-rehabilitation projects that we invest more than \$200,000 in, must also meet that standard. That means in order to receive investment from the city, the buildings must be designed to operate without on-site combustion of fossil fuels, like propane or natural gas, and they'll need to achieve a federal ENERGY STAR score of 90 or higher.

To benefit from certain financing programs offered by the city's Redevelopment Agency, buildings will source 100 percent of their electricity load from renewable sources. These net zero buildings are the *future* legacy of our work *today*, and we are making that future as clean and healthy as possible.

When the state government backed away from administering C-PACE, a program that helps developers finance building projects that are cleaner and more energy efficient, the city scrambled to make sure the program stayed alive.

Because of the impressive work of our Sustainability Department and our City Attorney's office, the new Hyatt Regency Hotel at the Salt Palace has become the largest C-PACE-financed hotel project in the nation, and will open its doors to visitors this fall. Our team has also closed a second C-PACE-financed project — a new airport hotel that will now include more energy-efficient heating, cooling, and lighting systems, as well as an on-site solar array.

Gas-powered lawn mowers are one of the most localized sources of air pollution, *each* generating 88 pounds of carbon dioxide and 34 pounds of other pollutants every year, so getting more of them swapped out for clean electric mowers needed to be a priority for us. The state's trade-in program was good, but not enough city residents were able to take part — especially residents on the West side, where summertime pollution levels are often highest.

So we invested city money in the program and last year, four times as many city residents were able to get rid of their polluting mowers at no cost. We quadrupled the number of residents in just one year and as a result, we will keep *4 tons* of pollution out of Salt Lake City's air each year.

We even increased participation by West side residents from just 1 to 2 percent in previous years, to 26 percent last year.

We're also reducing pollution by asking eligible city employees to work from home on 'orange' and 'red' air-quality days. Fewer employees in the office means fewer cars on the road. I made it official city policy last year.

Even with all our effort as your city government, the single biggest cause of our poor air quality is still largely out of our hands. Forty-two percent of the pollution choking our air comes from cars and trucks.

Dr. Logan Mitchell — a research professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at the U — [conducted a study](#) of our air pollution during the early days of the pandemic, when vehicle traffic was reduced by as much as half. He found 57 percent lower levels of nitric oxide, 36 percent lower levels of nitrogen dioxide, and as much as 33 percent lower levels of carbon dioxide in our air. Particulate matter fell by 59 percent.

There is an element of personal responsibility here that we simply can't ignore. If we want better air quality, the best thing we can do is take public transit, or if you can, switch to a clean electric vehicle.

My government is working hard to make it easier for you to make those choices, adding bus shelters to make waiting for your bus more comfortable, and extending the S-Line streetcar line further east into the core of Sugar House.

Today we announced a partnership with UTA and other Wasatch Front partners to offer "Free Fare February." Every ride you take on UTA next month will be completely free as part of a strategy to reduce vehicle emissions while the threat of inversion is still high. This will be our longest free-fare transit endeavor in the history of Utah public transit and it will help inform our long-term strategy for transforming the way we move around the city and beyond.

But the reality is, our current public transit options are still too far out of reach for many of our residents. The nearest bus line or TRAX station may be too far a walk, or too costly a taxi ride. And if we want to reduce the number of polluting cars on the road, we simply need to make it easier for every resident to navigate our city without a personal vehicle.

That's why we've started a partnership with UTA to launch an on-demand ride service, beginning first on the West side. We're investing nearly two million dollars of Funding Our Future tax dollars to help residents connect to the city's public transit system.

Cheaper than an Uber or a Lyft, residents of the service area in Rose Park, Fairpark, Glendale, Jordan Meadows, and Poplar Grove will be able to call or use the app to arrange corner-to-corner service. And once you've paid the \$2.50, you can transfer to a bus or TRAX for free.

UTA On Demand is a great step toward the more equitable public transit system Salt Lake City residents deserve. And you'll see more of it across the city in the future.

The natural decline in UTA ridership triggered by the pandemic may have slowed the rollout of our Tickets for Transit program, but I remain extremely optimistic about where this program will take us. The idea is for your ticket to a Jazz game, a show at the Eccles Theater, or for other events in Salt Lake City to double as a free UTA pass to and from the show.

There is so much interest among event sponsors to see this program come together.

As we speak, the Salt Lake City Department of Airports is working on a permanent plan for allowing your plane ticket to double as a TRAX ticket to and from the airport.

To further reduce emissions, my government has accelerated the timeline for converting the city's fleet of vehicles to EV models.

The all-electric cars in our Compliance Division have already driven over 119,000 miles, saving 8,500 gallons of gas, and kept more than 75 metric tons of pollution out of the air. We're going to keep growing our fleet and the EV infrastructure needed to support it.

And finally, on our fourth track, we are taking unprecedented control of our energy future. And I really cannot underscore enough the enormity of this progress.

While the single-biggest contributor of pollution here is the vehicles on our roads, the biggest move *local* government can make is by influencing the kind of electricity that comes into the city to serve every single customer.

For years, our electricity provider told us that Salt Lake City would be able to start receiving all of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. We attempted to negotiate an earlier delivery of that clean power, but what became clear during those negotiations was made official in October: Rocky Mountain Power was not able to deliver that critical, renewable energy ahead of schedule, but instead, they would have to delay another *20 years*.

I'm proud to report: we had a *backup plan*.

We are taking unprecedented control of our energy future with two big steps.

The first step involves meeting the city *government's* electricity needs with clean, renewable energy. In October, I went out to Tooele County to break ground on a 80-megawatt solar farm being built to generate clean electricity for Salt Lake City, Park City, Summit County, Utah Valley University, and a pair of ski resorts.

This project is one of Utah's most significant renewable energy collaborations *ever*, and is among the biggest solar farms connected to Rocky Mountain Power's grid. It will generate almost 100 percent of the electricity needed to power Salt Lake City's public buildings — city hall, our libraries, our police and fire stations, and our office buildings around town.

That solar power should start coming online early next year.

Step 2 is even bigger.

After months of negotiations, Salt Lake City has forged a nationally unprecedented partnership with 14 other local governments *and* Rocky Mountain Power to form a brand-new cooperative agency that will bring net-100 percent renewable electricity to our entire community. The Community Renewable Energy Agency will make it possible for everyone in Salt Lake City to eliminate their dependence on energy from fossil fuels by 2030.

These are the kind of steps I dreamed of as an air-quality advocate — our city is taking unprecedented control of its energy future.

Every tree we plant... Every mower we swap out... Every public-transit ride... Every energy-efficient upgrade and every net-zero building that goes up... Combined with the 100 percent renewable energy that will soon flow into our city... we are making history together.

And I'm incredibly proud.

VIDEO 1: COMMUNITY (4 minutes)

That fills my heart.

Of course they're right. We *have* been tested, and air quality is not the only serious challenge facing our city today. Housing, homelessness, public safety, equity, COVID — all are important, but before I speak to them, I want to pause for perspective.

For all the problems we think we have, the truth is, we are so lucky to be living in *this* city at *this* moment — in this particular moment — before it grows beyond our influence. Wherever we are in this city, we're minutes from an amazing trail, minutes from some of the best food and beer... anywhere. Minutes from wonderful arts and culture.

We are the most diverse, accepting, and equitable city in our state. We took our Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index score from 75 to 100 last year. That's amazing! I am so proud of who we are and we are so lucky that Salt Lake City is our home.

The *tests* we have faced have made it easy to forget what an *incredible* moment we're in. And though we won't be able to preserve everything that made our once-small town what it was, we have the opportunity to shape what the future of our city will be.

We are the capital city of the fastest-growing state in the nation. The growth is happening, but it's up to us to *shape* it, to get more out of it for current residents, and to make sure that the benefits of this growth are enjoyed equitably in every neighborhood in this city.

That growth doesn't *just* look like shiny new towers pushing our skyline higher. It looks like exciting new job opportunities at innovative biotech firms opening around the city. It looks like small businesses opening in newly built retail spaces in Ballpark. It looks like increased tax revenue to pay for road repairs in Liberty Wells and Foothills and Poplar Grove, new parks in Glendale and Sugar House, and modern sewer and water infrastructure in Rose Park and the Avenues. It looks like new TRAX stations and expanded bus lines reaching underserved parts of the city.

It is our opportunity and our responsibility to make sure our unprecedented growth works for everyone.

Government is not and has never been the solution to every challenge, but here in Utah, cities are always on the front lines of the biggest issues Utahns face. No issue better illustrates the gulf between what needs to be done and what city government is able to do than the cost of living.

Salt Lake City is short more than 18,000 units of affordable housing right now. Our vacancy rate on rentals is below 2 percent, and homes for sale are only staying on the market a median of six days.

I know some residents wish the city could impose a ceiling on rental rates, but state law forbids cities from enacting any kind of rent control. I agree that the \$7.25 minimum wage in Utah is

embarrassingly, abysmally — INHUMANELY — low, but state law forbids cities from setting a living wage.

In the [13 years since the minimum wage was last increased](#), the median home value in Salt Lake City has more than doubled from [\\$235,000 in 2008](#) to [just under \\$500,000 last year](#).

I know some residents wish I could stop certain private housing projects from replacing older privately owned buildings, or prevent a private homeowner from flipping their rental property, or require every unit in every new housing project to be affordable enough for them to occupy it, but city governments don't have that power in Utah.

So what do we do when so many of the levers working against us are outside of our control?

We certainly don't just give up and accept it.

People are struggling. Neighbors are losing their homes and being forced out of the city or even onto the streets.

We can't give up.

Instead, it is *our* leaders' responsibility to be creative; to look for ways to lower the costs of living without running afoul of current state law and, ideally, without *inviting* new state laws that punish every city because we dared to try.

No matter what your income is, we want it to be possible for you to spend 30 percent or less of your income on housing. That's what "affordable housing" means. For the average Utahn spending 20 percent on transportation alone, I know that having affordable rent or mortgage is only a piece of the pie.

We often talk about the problem as "affordable HOUSING" but it's really about affordable LIVING, isn't it? A bargain apartment rental isn't a bargain if you have to pay for parking, gas, insurance, and car maintenance.

It is the goal of *this* government to lower the cost of *living*, not only the cost of *housing*.

So we are racing to repair our roads at a faster pace than ever because damage caused by potholes and traffic caused by aging infrastructure actually increase residents' cost of living.

We are applying for more federal grants for roads and infrastructure repair *than ever* so those costs *aren't* passed along to city taxpayers.

We are expanding transit lines and bus shelters to make riding affordable public transit easier than ever.

We are taking advantage of once-in-a-lifetime federal investment through President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act to expand access to high-quality early childhood education.

The city government invested in more affordable units of housing in the last year than ever before, and we have more deed-restricted units in place than ever, ensuring that affordability *lasts*.

Six affordable housing projects backed by the city's Redevelopment Agency were completed in the last year, totalling 345 new affordable units. We also invested more than \$6.5 million in another five projects that will bring another 735 affordable units in the coming years.

Our first-ever citywide gentrification study is well underway, with the goal of helping more of our residents *stay* in the communities *they* have helped *build*.

I am encouraged that the state legislature is expected to consider legislation this year that could allow cities to engage in inclusionary zoning, increasing the city's leverage for the construction of new affordable housing units. Inclusionary zoning could be the biggest step the state legislature has ever taken to improve and diversify the housing supply across Utah, and I am hopeful legislators choose to act before the housing crisis gets even further out of reach.

Containing the cost of living is also an imperative for the city's work on homelessness.

Not a day goes by in this job that I don't think about the unsheltered members of our community, their needs, and what Salt Lake City should be doing to assist.

But if we are going to have a real shot at solving this issue — and let's be clear, with our homeless population numbers, a solution *IS* within reach — we need EVERY elected leader in our state to ask themselves those same questions, and to *be a partner* in creating change. Because it's going to take more than just a few cities to really make that progress, and that's just not what's happening right now.

Salt Lake *City* residents have footed too much of the bill for addressing a STATEWIDE humanitarian crisis. The current imbalance is simply not sustainable for Salt Lake City taxpayers.

In August I asked the state legislature to support the Salt Lake Valley Coalition for the Homeless and its partners in getting the winter overflow beds online *before* the temperatures became dangerous.

I also requested the state provide Salt Lake City with dependable, adequate funding for public safety and the Downtown Ambassadors program, and that the state fund new behavioral health services to cover the gap in services before the county mental health receiving center is completed next year. Those services have still not been offered.

We offered city money to help pay for overflow beds anywhere in Salt Lake County.

For three consecutive years since the opening of the new smaller dispersed Homeless Resource Centers, and since my swearing in, Salt Lake City has been asked to host the vast majority of the emergency overflow beds because there are not enough spaces in the homeless resource centers for everyone.

I was grateful to the city of Millcreek for stepping up to host some overflow beds last winter, and while most other cities have stood by passively watching this crisis boil over, Salt Lake City has

invoked special land use exemptions to address this statewide, human emergency. The City is hosting over 400 winter overflow beds right now, in addition to the 430 year round beds in the resource centers.

While we are all grateful for state and county funding for operations of emergency shelters and resource centers, we cannot ignore the disproportionate impacts placed on our city to host this volume of people and services every year.

In Salt Lake City's Community Commitment Program, we mobilized an unprecedented effort with more than a dozen organizations to bring services and resources *directly* to our unsheltered neighbors to try to help them get the support they deserve, and shelter they need. Instead of expecting people to come in off the street, we are meeting people where they are.

Administering COVID vaccines. Securing permanent housing for the unsheltered. Resolving legal issues with judges on the street or in kayaks. Connecting mental health and behavioral health support.

I am immensely proud of these efforts. I am inspired by the commitment and grace of the city employees, by the social workers who work for our partners, and by the volunteers who participate in this effort. It is this kind of public service that truly sets our city apart.

But if we're ever going to *end* the homelessness crisis, we need to be candid with each other about four uncomfortable realities in the city's work addressing homelessness.

The first of them is that not every offer of help we make is accepted. According to our service providers, *many* of our offers to those who are unsheltered are declined.

There are a lot of reasons an unsheltered individual may choose not to accept offers of assistance. There are not enough emergency beds available year-round. There are not enough mental health or substance abuse supports available. There is not enough housing to allow the Homeless Resource Centers to help people move out in a timely fashion.

And, in the end, everyone has the prerogative to choose for themselves.

There's no virtue in casting blame, but we're never going to actually solve the problem if we deny the complexity of the challenge.

Salt Lakers are generous, compassionate people. I am so proud of the grace in our community. We want to help — we are *determined* to help — but I cannot let that compassion and generosity continue to be unfairly taken advantage of.

That's what's happening now and that's the second uncomfortable reality: *because* state leaders and the leaders of so many other municipalities believe Salt Lake City *will always* step up, they feel comfortable standing back.

The effect of this is that a very small number of cities in the state shoulder a disproportionate financial burden. In 2021, Salt Lake City spent over \$26 million addressing homelessness *directly* and addressing the side effects of so many people not having housing. I know other cities — South Salt Lake, Midvale, Ogden, St. George, and Logan — share a similar burden.

And yet, unlike other municipalities in this county, Salt Lake City receives no guaranteed financial compensation from the state of Utah for these efforts.

The third uncomfortable reality is that the city cannot fully address the state's crisis on its own. The scope and complexity are well beyond the capacity of any single municipal government, though that doesn't mean we shouldn't be trying to do more.

In my State of the City address last year, I introduced the idea of building a tiny home community for unsheltered residents. Within four months, the city had found a willing partner to take the lead on it — the Other Side Academy — and by the end of 2021, our Planning Commission had supported a rezoning request for the community's future home.

The incredible speed at which this project is moving is a testament to the commitment of the city and our partners to address the complex challenges of the homelessness crisis. In his budget for the coming year, Governor Cox proposed \$20 million for the Other Side Village and I urge the Legislature to agree to fund his request, along with the full amount requested by the governor for affordable housing.

The fourth uncomfortable reality is that the homelessness crisis does not ONLY impact the unsheltered. It affects businesses, their workers, housed residents, and their kids. It impacts how safe people feel, both in public spaces and sometimes in their homes. It affects people's willingness to patronize some businesses, which often also struggle to retain employees. The nature of large encampments invites infiltration by criminals who feel no remorse in using the suffering of others as a cloak to engage in illicit activity.

Discussing these things publicly may be controversial... but pretending they don't exist serves nobody.

It bears repeating: Salt Lake *City* residents have footed too much of the bill for addressing a *statewide* humanitarian crisis. The current imbalance is simply not sustainable for Salt Lake City taxpayers.

Salt Lake City's values will not change. Our compassion will not be diminished. We will continue to bring our grit, our grace, and our resilience to the state's homelessness crisis.

These are our *neighbors* and they need our help.

It is not unreasonable to expect the state legislature to do the same, so today I am calling on the leaders of cities and towns around the state, and indeed all Utahns, to reach out to their representatives on Capitol Hill and urge them to increase the state's investment in its homelessness and housing crisis.

First and foremost, to make a generational investment in deeply affordable housing and accompanying services that help residents succeed.

To invest in new permanent shelter beds that should be located more equitably;

To invest in public safety here in the capital city, as it does in our neighboring cities that host homeless resource centers;

To not leave Salt Lake City taxpayers on their own to address this crisis moving forward;

We should all be in this together. As a state, it is long past time that we, as Utahns, start listening to our moral compass.

As a city, compassion will continue to lead our strategy, but it cannot be our only strategy. A statewide crisis demands a statewide solution. My administration will continue to deepen and diversify the city's approach to homelessness, and we will keep the pressure on the legislature and our neighbors around the county and the state to play a bigger role in addressing it.

We've also been tested when it comes to public safety.

Just like almost every major American city, we saw a rise of criminal activity early in the pandemic. In Salt Lake City, crime surged through last winter and peaked in March, outpacing our typical year-to-date average by a shocking 26 percent.

Salt Lake City may no longer be the small town we once were, but every city resident, everyone who works in our city, and everyone who visits our city deserves to feel safe here. *Everyone*.

The good news is: even though our officers are responding to more calls than ever, *crime is down* in Salt Lake City. By the end of 2021, we had seen a *reduction* in overall crime of 6 percent — that's a 32-point improvement from where we were in March.

As comforting as that may be, let me be clear: there is *no* amount of criminal activity that is acceptable for Salt Lake City. None.

That's why last year we launched the most aggressive Crime Control Plan in our city's history, with initiatives like Call Diversion, a Police Civilian Response Team, the Business Community Engagement Officer Program and a Violent Crimes Task Force — programs designed to prioritize the deployment of city resources and take criminals off our streets.

We also partnered with the U.S. Attorney, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Utah Public Safety Commissioner, and the U.S. Marshal's office to target "apex" criminals. The worst of the worst.

Project Safe Neighborhoods has resulted in charges against 183 defendants, with jail sentences averaging 38 months. We've taken 194 guns and more than 50 kilos of meth, heroin, and cocaine off our streets, and recovered more than \$210,000 in illicit cash.

Our police department's response time has also improved significantly, down from 17 minutes, 34 seconds for priority one calls in August, to 10 minutes, 46 seconds in December.

Confronted with a profound shortage of officers, I worked with the Council last year to implement the largest pay increase for our police officers since the 1990s, and a signing bonus for officers transferring from other police departments.

As a result, our vacancies have shrunk from 91 in June to 36 today.

Right now we have 43 recruits in training, with the next class set to graduate in February, and in *just* the past three weeks, we've received 114 applications for future academy classes. We are

aggressively rebuilding our department, and we're doing it without compromising our high standards.

I am delighted to report that we are on track to be fully staffed again this summer.

All this progress has happened while pioneering an aggressive slate of common-sense reforms to how police protect and engage with our community... reforms that make residents AND officers safer.

My first set of reforms took effect in October 2020. After receiving specialized training from Kulture City for engaging people with sensory conditions like autism, our first responders became the first in the nation to be certified as "Sensory Inclusive."

The recommendations of the Commission on Racial Equity in Policing were reflected in my 2021 budget, including the funding to hire 12 more social workers, and equity, inclusion and diversity training for our officers. The Commission will continue its important work, and we look forward to their next set of recommendations later this year.

My goal is for Salt Lake City to lead the state in public safety.

That means ensuring that not only does the police department have the resources *it* needs, but that a community-based approach is at the core of our strategy. I'm proud of the progress we're making. I'm proud of our officers who show up every day to keep our city safe, and I'm proud of the direction we're going — the community-based approach we're taking — as we make the city safer for everyone.

And finally tonight, we're going to end where we started, the elephant in literally every room: COVID.

VIDEO 2: MEDICAL (2 minutes)

Wow.

I'm so grateful to the medical professionals of our city who are trying so hard, every day, to save lives. It's scary to see them struggling, but it's so important people understand where we are in this pandemic.

As much as I would like — as much as we ALL would like to pretend like the pandemic has ended and move on with our lives, that just isn't reality.

There was no playbook for managing a crisis like this, so we had to write it, and rewrite it, and rewrite it again. We're rewriting it again today as sick Utahns from around the state fill our hospitals. We've had to be creative and bold and marshal a whole-of-government response to try to keep residents safe.

When the state stepped back, we stepped up. There are situations that demand boldness and this pandemic has been one of them.

The initial stay-at-home order feels now like a million years ago, but it gave our hospitals time to prepare for the first wave.

We quickly created a million-dollar emergency loan program to help small businesses make payroll, long before any federal program was approved. We fought for a moratorium on evictions and put \$20 million into housing assistance to help keep people in their homes.

I extended the citywide life-saving mask requirement after the state's "endgame" law took effect because that's what the science called for, and even while temporary, it helped protect people.

I required face coverings for students and teachers in K-12 schools for the same reason, and although most of the attention for that requirement — good and bad — was focused on me, I want to take a moment and credit the City Council for bravely and boldly sustaining and extending that requirement these last few months, and making our kids, their families, teachers, and everyone they interact with everyday safer.

As a parent, as a resident, and as the mayor: Thank you.

I realize the irony of saying this about a pandemic so widely defined by isolation, but the truth is, none of us can fight this pandemic on our own.

We've been trying to navigate a balance between public safety and personal responsibility... and for the most part that's been rewarded. The city has shown tremendous resilience and grit; and incredible grace in trying to help others through this time.

In many ways we ARE turning the page on COVID-19, but with a revolving door of new variants and an ebb and flow of new cases, it's more like we're starting a new chapter than picking up a new book.

Or at least, we *will* be when the Omicron wave recedes.

Our government is shifting from looking at COVID as an acute crisis to treating it as a chronic condition, not because the virus is any less deadly to the unvaccinated and immunocompromised, and not because our ICUs are any less crowded, but the bitter reality is that a sudden, miraculous end to this pandemic is not coming, and frankly, the city government is running out of ways to slow the spread of the virus.

We will continue to do what we can and what our health experts advise — within the parameters state law allows — but we also have to acknowledge personal responsibility is the most powerful tool remaining in our arsenal. The government can't end this on its own.

We need you.

We must pull on the resilience inside each of us and stay vigilant. If you're vaccinated, get your booster and keep those masks on in indoor public spaces. Masks are even more critical for the unvaccinated, who, if they are able, I hope will finally choose to get that safe, free, life-saving vaccination as quickly as possible. Don't wait until it's too late.

Knowing COVID will be with us for a long time, my team has been working on a long-term COVID resilience plan for the city. Transitioning out of crisis mode doesn't mean my

government is throwing its hands up. To the contrary, we will continue to lead, and we will never stop trying to keep Salt Lake City residents safe, Salt Lake City businesses open, Salt Lake City workers employed, and Salt Lake City kids in school.

Our city has been tested these last two years, but we are rising to the occasion. The people of this city are resilient and we have an incredible future in front of us.

The grit and the grace of the people of this city have shined as we have weathered these stormy times, but tonight I need to ask you for more.

More vigilance. More patience. More compassion. And more kindness.

Sometimes it's hard to power through the exhaustion. It's hard to see past the vitriol and condescension on social media. It's hard to see leaders in the Capitol sitting back instead of stepping up. It's hard to look at the encampments in our public spaces and see the *individual people* who are struggling. It's hard to look at our dangerously low vaccination rates and find compassion for those who are scared or who believe the misinformation they have been fed.

Masked, unmasked, vaccinated, unvaccinated, housed and house-less, activist and elected — we are *all* Salt Lakers.

I know it's hard. I know you're tired. We all are. But when I find myself thirsting for joy, I pick my head up, look around and I see inspiration all around us in this city.

Keep your hearts open and your eyes focused on the road ahead.

We *will* get through this together and we will emerge stronger because of it.

Thank you for listening. Be safe.

Good night.